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Information relevant to the problem of early school learning was presented. A majority of the 89 schools in the Holding Power Project of the Bureau of Guidance in the New York State Education Department were rural. Holding power was defined as the ratio of the number of graduates in a secondary school class to the potential number of graduates in that class. Potential dropouts were identified and assisted to stay in school; 15,000 students were studied from seventh grade through graduation.

Small schools and rural schools retained fewer students, proportionately, through graduation than did suburban schools, but retained the same percentage as large city schools. There was a high correlation between the parents' socioeconomic status and the school's holding power; and there was a link between status, community type, and school size. A technique predicted early school leavers by requiring the annual rating of all pupils on a scale whose items were associated with early school leaving.

Efforts to improve school holding power involved enhancing the values of education for both students and their parents. Recommendations to figure the retention rate of recent graduating classes and to study the reasons for dropping out included: developing and keeping a record of pertinent information for each student; identifying potential dropouts; pinpointing dropouts' potentialities in nonpromoted students and those whose marks dropped; arranging and coordinating staff efforts to aid retention; involving potential dropouts' parents in retention efforts; and considering for potential dropouts school program adjustments, work-study programs, counseling, summer contacts by school personnel, and extracurricular activities.

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PROGRAMS OF RURAL SCHOOLS TO REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF DROPOUTS

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

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PROGRAMS OF RURAL SCHOOLS TO REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF DROPOUTS

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ABSTRACT

The literature contains much information of value relevant to the problem of early school leaving, but is of less help in identifying successful techniques for reducing the incidence of dropouts in rural schools. Because a majority of the 89 schools in the Holding Power Project conducted between 1954 and 1960 by the Bureau of Guidance, New York State Education Department, were rural in location, certain of the findings of that project were developed in this paper.

For a number of reasons, it has seemed apparent that the decisions of individual students to leave school are best understood in terms of the attitude toward education prevalent among those of their socioeconomic class, principally, of course, their parents. To affect such deep seated convictions requires close cooperation between school staff members (who themselves may make unconscious appraisals of the propriety of continued education for individual students which are conditioned by their identification of the students' status) and parents. Cooperation must be consistent among staff members and over a period considerably in advance of the possible early departure of the student. Thus early identification of the potential dropout is important. A predictive technique developed in the Holding Power Project was described.

Guidance counselors in most schools occupy an especially favorable position from which to coordinate the efforts of staff members to assist individual potential dropouts and from which to seek the close support of parents for these efforts.

A number of more specific recommendations for the reduction of the incidence of early school learning were made. Those which were listed in the "summary" follow:

(1) Ascertain the retention rate of one or more recent graduating classes and study the reasons that pupils left school.

(2) Develop and keep up-to-date a good record of pertinent information for each pupil.

(3) Identify potential dropouts systematically.

(4) Be particularly alert to dropout proneness in non-promoted students and those whose marks take a marked turn downward.

(5) Arrange and coordinate staff efforts to prevent early school leaving.

(6) Consider for potential dropouts, school program adjustments, school-work experience programs, additional counseling, summer contacts by school personnel, and extra curricular activities.

(7) Closely involve the parents of potential dropouts in all retention efforts.

Our results suggest that small rural school districts now retain a smaller percent of students than suburban districts (but not large cities) and that they may encounter more problems in improving their retention rates than suburban districts.

PROGRAMS OF RURAL SCHOOLS

TO REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF DROPOUTS

INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to identify rural schools that have had signal success in reducing early school leaving. The literature is replete with recitations of the characteristics of dropouts, with lists of reasons for their departure, but relatively bereft of examples of school districts which made substantial and successful attacks on the problem. We speak in the last instance of attempts of local faculties in usual school situations in contrast to the short-term, relatively sheltered, highly controlled ventures conducted by doctoral candidates.

For this reason I have chosen to borrow some of the insights gained through the Holding Power Project conducted by the Bureau of Guidance, New York State Education Department, in cooperation with 89 secondary schools between 1954 and 1960. The study was designed to determine factors by which potential dropouts might be identified and assisted to remain in school. All the members of the class of 1960 in the schools served as the study population as they progressed from grade 7 through graduation. Some 15,000 students were involved. More than half of the schools were located in relatively rural school districts.

Holding power was defined as the ratio of the number of graduates from a single class in a secondary school, to the potential number of graduates from that class, expressed as a percent. All pupils who were ever members of the class during its secondary school years and who did not voluntarily leave the group were considered to be potential graduates. Thus, pupils entering the group by transfer or retardation were listed as potential graduates and pupils transferred or retarded out of the group were not. Dropouts were included as potential graduates.

SCHOOL HOLDING POWER RATES

Our results suggest that smaller and rural schools are likely to retain a smaller percent of students through graduation than schools which could be identified as suburban, but about the same percent as large city school districts.

Schools which improved their rates the most were those which exerted more distinct efforts of all types with potential dropouts. This statement needs some explanation. At first we had hoped to be able to distinguish specific practices which had a significant relationship to the holding power of the school. We found none. We have argued from this, as will be indicated later, that the forces propelling students toward early withdrawal are of such magnitude that they are unlikely to yield to single techniques.

One of the sharpest relationships established in our work was a high correlation between the socioeconomic status of the parents of the pupils in the

population and the holding power of their schools; the higher the status the greater percent retained through graduation. Status was estimated from "father's occupation."

It was also determined that there is a "climate" prevalent among the students in high holding power schools, as expressed in their attitude toward education, which significantly sets them apart from students in low holding power schools. The former had a more positive attitude toward the values of education than the latter. These observations were made after an analysis of questionnaires administered to seniors in schools with high and with low holding power. It should be noted that both respondent groups were still in school.

Our questionnaire results were considered as a specific manifestation of status since the responses, when grouped according to the holding power of schools were very similar to those obtained when the responses of students in an earlier administration were grouped according to parental status.

It may be useful to hypothesize a general factor affecting the disposition to leave school of which all the others are corollaries. Such a pervasive influence would appear to be the status of parents, recalling the relationship between parental status and student questionnaire responses. A link between status, community type, and school size was demonstrated in the Holding Power Project. If status is the general factor, then an hypothesis becomes: School holding power is a function of the status level of the parents of the children the school serves, and more particularly of the attitudes toward education attached to the status level of parents.

Thus far no attempt has been made to relate school retention efforts to the general status factor. Do school personnel operate independently of this influence? Our results suggest that they do not. The schools which improved their holding power the most exerted more efforts to hold students than did schools in which holding power improved the least. However, in terms of community type and class size, schools with high gains in holding power more closely approached the suburban conditions associated with elevated status. Thus, it could be said that the high gain school efforts were pursued in a propitious community climate.

If holding power rates are to be improved what action do our findings suggest? Obviously, our concern must be with those elements affecting school holding power that are susceptible to change. Of those identified, two appear as logical areas for investment. These are school retention efforts and the educational appreciations of parents and students. Both elements are encompassed in the following recommendation:

Efforts to improve school holding power must concentrate on the enhancement of the values of education for all the parents and students that the school serves.

Lest this statement be dismissed as another "glittering generality," these points should be reviewed:

1. The factor we are combatting is a product of socioeconomic status, a pervasive but unpalpable attitude toward education to which parents, students, and even staff members, are conditioned through years of reinforcement from their social environment.

2. Specific techniques to reduce early school leaving in our cooperating schools were not significantly related to changes in holding power. Only the summed efforts of all types showed a substantial result in improved holding power. Early school leaving cannot be reduced through application of isolated remediation.

To attain our objective requires two major accomplishments.

1. Each school staff member must recognize his responsibility to offer his services fully to each of his assigned students. Essentially, what is urged is the creation of a school climate sufficiently consistent and sufficiently evidenced in overt acts as to make obvious to parents and students, both the desire and the capacity of the school to serve them. In a word, staff members must convince students who might contemplate leaving school before graduation, and their parents, that they, as individual professionals, can and will make continued attendance meaningful for them.

2. If early school leaving is the final expression of an attitude toward education, principally learned at home, then parents must regularly, and often, from the earliest years of enrollment, be encouraged to assume the role of full partnership with the school in promoting the progress and development of each student. This is so important that, if a choice must be made between attention to parents or to their children, in an effort to reduce early school leaving, it does seem that the greatest eventual profit might accrue to work with parents.

PREDICTION OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS

Techniques were developed as part of the Project that permitted identification of potential dropouts well in advance of their departure. Because another paper discusses the characteristics of rural dropouts, we discuss our findings only briefly, sufficient only to help serve as a basis for our recommendations. The technique required the annual rating of all pupils on a scale, the items of which were associated in the literature with early school leaving. A study of the results for pupils who voluntarily withdrew, and for those who remained in school indicated that the scale predicted future dropouts with acceptable accuracy. The ratings revealed, however, that greater success may be expected in the detection of potential male dropouts than females. Approximately 80 percent of the males were identified as possible early school leavers at least a year before withdrawal, and 70 percent of the females.

Below are listed the items on the scale in order of decreasing predictability:

Rank	Characteristic	Qualifying Condition
1	Age	Old for grade group (over 2 years)
2	Grade Retardation	One year or more retarded
3	Learning Rate	Below 90 I.Q.
4	Pupil's Interest	Little or none
5	School Marks	Predominantly below "C"
6	Ability to Read	Two years or more below grade level
7	Parental Attitude	Negative
8	General Adjustment	Fair or poor
9	Participation in Out-of-School Activities	Fair or poor
10	Attendance	Chronic absenteeism (20 days or more a year)
11	Acceptance by Pupils	Not liked
12	Number of Children in Family	Five or more
13	Reactions to School Controls	Resents controls
14	Educational Level Achieved by: Mother	Grade 7 or below
15	Parental Attitude	Vacillating
16	Participation in School Activities	None
17	Educational Level Achieved by: Father	Grade 7 or below
18	Father's Occupation	Unskilled Semiskilled
19	Health	Frequently ill Easily fatigues

Rank	Characteristic	Qualifying Condition
20	School-to-School Transfers	Pattern of "jumping" from school to school
21	Physical Size	Small for age group Large for age group

RECOMMENDATIONS

PREFACE

We have made some general suggestions for the reduction of the incidence of early school leaving. We have described a practice which shows promise of making it possible for school officials to determine which of their pupils may be likely to leave, and, thus, upon whom attention should be concentrated. Other more specific possibilities will be offered for your consideration but these we feel must be prefaced by a note of caution.

To prepare a blueprint for the improvement of the holding power of rural schools based upon the knowledge of the problem now available, is not an enormously difficult undertaking. However, the development of a list of activities by no means can be expected to insure its widespread adoption. Ultimately such proposals must serve as a resource for those who find, in early school leaving, a problem or some consequence. When does early school leaving become a problem? This is really a question of educational philosophy. Should all students complete 12 years of education and graduate from secondary school? There are not many who hold this. However, our study reveals that between one-quarter and one-fifth of potential graduates choose to leave school before graduation. Surely this is a large enough proportion about which to be concerned. It remains for local rural districts to establish their own professionally justifiable retention rates in the range between 75 and 100 percent.

While the proportions of students who leave early are impressive, the individual withdrawals which contribute to the total are accomplished with little or no drama or fanfare. The filtering out of students takes place so quietly and with such dispersion over the years that this leakage only rarely incites any alarm.

All of which is recited to highlight certain important considerations, the first of which is this: Little or nothing can be done to assist a greater percent of potential graduates to complete their secondary training until substantial portions of the staffs of secondary schools recognize in this leakage, a problem for which they have a responsibility. Only to the extent that the problem "touches home" can any solution be expected. Perhaps this recitation seems a bit overdrawn. However, if nothing else, our work has indicated that predisposition toward early school leaving seems rooted in the values attached to social class. The power of these forces in influencing attitudes toward other cultural symbols has long been known. Efforts must be made to alter these attitudes, which brings us back to school personnel.

We have all heard the expression, "all teachers teach English." In exactly the same way all members of the staff affect the holding power of a school. Because of the strength of the convictions toward education inculcated by parents and other adults, the school can influence this attitude in students, positively, only by the conscious, consistent efforts of most of its staff. Although this project, for obvious reasons, was conducted through the good offices of the guidance counselors in our cooperating systems, in only rare situations can contact with counselors alone effectively counteract the forces moving a student toward premature departure. At the very least, if any measurable improvements are to occur, counselor efforts must be buttressed and blended with those of the remainder of the faculty. Even granting such widespread and concentrated attention to the problem, success seems endangered unless the support of parents is enlisted.

Education is both an art and a science. Its scientific element is apparent in the classification and study of pupils who differ in important ways from their peers. As a result of these investigations, among others, educators speak knowingly of the underachiever, the gifted student, the slow learner. To this list, the potential early school leaver should be added. As with the other groups, these last are best served, not by the development of procedures radically different from those of the normal program, but by "artfully" shifting in emphasis the program for all so as to take into account their particular needs and characteristics. Indeed, much of current educational practice has had its inception in the increased sensitivity of staff members to student characteristics first isolated in connection with the study of specific educational problems. To serve students disposed toward early school leaving requires no extensive alteration of present educational technique, but, most of all, an enrichment of educational philosophy which insists that our resources be proffered more generously to them.

The general elevation of interest rather than the sporadic completion of certain activities designed to improve the holding power rate has another point to recommend it. Students, except in the most unusual cases, do not decide overnight to leave school. Rather the decision is the culmination of literally years of conditioning as to the value of education. To overcome this consistent negative influence calls for an equally long term display of the commonplace conviction of the attributes of education for all students.

THE GUIDANCE FUNCTION AND EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

If all members of the staff affect the holding power of a school, then recommendations to improve holding power have implications for all staff members. However, the guidance function, representing, as it does, the school's most formal attempt to personalize its service to individual students, offers perhaps the best vantage point from which to coordinate the efforts to assist potential early school leavers and their parents. Still another argument for the vesting of this responsibility in the guidance counselor resides in the dispersion of potential leavers among the formal programs of the school. The counselor is the staff member whose duties most often require his attention to the progress of the student under each and all of his colleagues to whom the student is assigned. It is important that the coordination of the attempts to assist these students be delegated to a person in such a position. Further,

the counselor normally has contacts with parents and facilities which encourage such contacts, to a greater degree than teachers.

Accordingly, our recommendations appear within an outline whose topics are the major functions of a guidance program. Although the reasons for this preference have been explained, they must not be construed as an argument for the relegation of the responsibility for the reduction of early school leaving to the guidance service, alone. All staff members properly assume certain guidance duties. Perhaps only in the area of counseling are the skill requirements so specialized that counselor efforts must be emphasized more than those of other staff members. Even here, the eventual impact depends importantly upon the related efforts of other staff members.

ARTICULATION AND ORIENTATION

Normally we think of this area as one associated with the progress of students through successively higher levels of secondary education and finally into the labor market, higher education or the armed forces. Our data suggest that equal attention must be given to those students whose progress is arrested at particular levels; 40 percent of those retarded into the project group later withdrew, and 44 percent of all repeats occurred in the early secondary grades.

Probably the assumption has been made that these students need no special orientation ". . .because they've been through it all before." Precisely because their previous experience was unsuccessful, students who are not promoted with their classes require additional assistance to enable them to benefit from their prolonged stay. Both counselors and withdrawing students indicated the crushing effect of failure upon their plans to continue in school.

Articulation between grade levels has special significance for potential early school leavers. The summer abyss was not bridged by fully 24 percent of the students who withdrew from the project population.

Recommendations:

1. Special efforts are necessary with students who are not promoted to make clear to them the necessity for the decision and the advantages inherent in the repetition.

2. The reasons for which promotion was not granted must be identified and plans made by school personnel to prevent the continued operation of these restraints on the pupils' progress.

3. During the ensuing year, retained students must receive added support and encouragement from the school staff.

4. The understanding of parents of the necessity for the decision must be actively sought. Their cooperation in assisting the student to succeed in his second attempt is essential.

5. Teachers must be informed of the powerful effect of the retardation of students on their plans to graduate. Likewise teachers should know which of their students are "repeaters" so that they may be especially alert to their needs for assistance and encouragement.

6. Students known to be contemplating withdrawal should be encouraged at the end of the school year, during the summer months, and immediately upon the reopening of school in the fall, to continue their education. Parents should be included in this expression of concern.

ANALYSIS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Much information is available concerning the characteristics of students who drop out of school and the degree to which they differ in these attributes from their peers who remain in school. These findings have two important uses. They may be consulted as a guide to the detection of other students who may leave. Also, they include much of the information concerning students which must be considered in planning measures calculated to promote the development of their talents and the inhibition of their deficiencies. Review of these materials suggests the extent to which adaptations in the local school program must be provided if students predisposed to early school leaving are served adequately. Without exception, students who withdraw from school are less favorably regarded than those who do not voluntarily leave, on these points: measured ability, academic history, family type, attitude of parents toward continued education for their children, age at grade, and attendance.

Our results generally indicate that the junior high school withdrawal is more atypical than those from the senior high school grades.

In keeping with the qualifications expressed in the preface to this section, this information must be studied by counselor and teachers, together, to guarantee its most effective use. Parents, too, must be informed of the cumulative implications of the school record for their children's plans.

Recommendations:

1. For each student in secondary school, a comprehensive record of information should be available.

2. This information should form a basic resource to teachers and counselors in their cooperative efforts to (a) identify potential dropouts, (b) create effective plans for the development of all students.

3. The collected data should be regularly interpreted to all parents.

The foregoing has stressed the sharing of student information by teachers and counselors as essential to the design and implementation of effective plans to assist students. The formal means by which this may be accomplished is the case conference to which all staff members associated with a student contribute. Intimately related to the effectiveness of this procedure is the

inclusion of a definite assignment of responsibility for the implementation of recommended actions and for a later review of the results. Too often case conferences provide a vehicle through which the participants justify their inability to cope with a student and at which they seek support for this announcement, rather than suggestions which may improve their success.

Recommendations:

1. Case conferences should be convened for the review of information concerning students vulnerable to early school leaving at which plans are made to reduce this tendency.

2. Responsibility for the implementation of recommended steps and a later evaluation of the results of these efforts, should be specifically assigned.

The Project demonstrated that systematic review of certain information concerning students can lead to the identification of a substantial portion of those who leave school early, long before their departure. At the heart of the technique is the annual processing of the scale of critical student characteristics for all pupils. Obviously, early knowledge of plans to leave school should greatly facilitate any efforts to reduce the magnitude of the problem.

Recommendations:

1. The information available concerning students should be regularly examined to detect predispositions to early school leaving. The best results seem to accrue when the ratings assigned represent the consensus of all those who are familiar with the student.

2. When the review is completed, the vulnerable ratings for the members of each grade group should be analyzed as a step toward the detection of negative or positive forces generally present in the local school setting or in the community.

3. The results should be studied by all staff members who are in contact with the rated students.

4. Students with highly vulnerable ratings should be identified and listed for the information of all school personnel.

5. "Vulnerable" students should be studied further and plans created to assist them to remain in school.

6. The parents of vulnerable students should be informed of the school's concern for their premature departure and their cooperation solicited to reduce this tendency.

INFORMATIONAL SERVICE

An important part of the service by counselors to students is the provision of pertinent educational and occupational information. The analysis of the responses to the questionnaires administered in low and high holding power schools displayed the relatively tentative choice of occupations by those in high as contrasted to low holding power schools. Certainly related is the greater interest in education after high school among students from schools with high holding power. Naturally, occupational choice is a more immediate concern of those who must enter the labor market upon graduation. Such selection is even more urgently thrust upon the voluntary withdrawal. Therefore, special attempts must be made to impart to potential early school leavers some knowledge of the occupations they may enter, the facilities through which their education may be continued, and the out-of-school services available to them, at as early a moment as their inclinations are known. Since only slightly less than a quarter of typical student bodies are involved, it is possible that groups may be established for this purpose.

The choices open to those who do not complete high school are limited. It is of prime importance that this be impressed upon them. They must be aware that to leave school early is essentially to permanently relegate themselves to a disadvantaged economic position, regardless of their potential contribution to society.

Since marriage for female withdrawals usually occurs soon after leaving school, this topic should be discussed with potential female dropouts.

Recommendations:

1. Potential voluntary withdrawals should be helped to appreciate the full economic implications of early school leaving.

2. Although their choice of occupations is limited, information concerning the range from which their choice may be made should be provided.

3. Points "1" and "2" above should be attempted as soon as possible after identification. Group guidance may prove the best vehicle for this purpose.

4. Parents should be informed of the increasing importance of high school graduation in the labor market and the weakened economic position of those who do not achieve it.

5. The special demands of early marriage should be made clear to potential female dropouts.

COUNSELING

The aims of counseling with students who may leave school are not different from those for students generally. Essentially, the counselor seeks to create an atmosphere free of tension or pressure in which he and the client

can together determine the forces to which the student is or should be reacting and to develop plans for managing of these forces.

The project has revealed, however, that students who drop out have certain attitudes toward school that must be dealt with early in the counseling process. Quite simply, a good many of them "dislike school." Their "lack of success" has undoubtedly left them with at least some suspicion that they cannot expect any important help here, and this bias usually is not challenged at home.

Since much of the student's feelings toward school mirror those of his parents, and because attitudes learned at home are likely to be as strong as or stronger than those the school attempts to establish, efforts by the counselor to convince parents of the value of continued education for their children are perhaps even more important than his work with students. Without their suggestions and support the success of the school's exertions are seriously endangered.

Some counselors, comfortable and competent in group counseling, may find this technique less threatening to individual potential leavers than the usual counseling practices. For other reasons as well, group counseling may be a useful vehicle for the reduction of negative attitudes toward school.

Even the most fruitful contact with the counselor may eventually embitter potential leavers if the assistance received is not also extended by other staff members. The counselor must remember that what he may regard as effective aid, accomplished through regular interviews in the shelter of his office, may be difficult for a teacher, with 150 students, to emulate. Again, this argues for the team approach, including close cooperation in sharing information and planning by all those involved with particular students.

Because of the somewhat negative feelings which the student brings to the counseling situation, which must be neutralized before he can consider the benefits inherent in continued attendance, it is very important that counseling contacts with students and their parents be established immediately upon identification as a potential voluntary withdrawal.

Recommendations:

1. Counseling contact should be established with potential early school leavers as soon as this classification of the student is made.

2. Counseling assistance must be complemented by the efforts of all staff members with whom the student has any involvement.

3. Parents must be aware of the concern of staff members for their children. Their suggestions and support must be obtained.

PLACEMENT

Employment, enlistment in the Armed Forces for males, and marriage for females are the usual activities entered soon after leaving school by substantial proportions of early school leavers. Procedures should be established

which allow the utmost freedom to investigate, with informed and interested individuals, the possibilities and requirements inherent in the students' tentative goals. Even at the point of departure, the school has a responsibility to enable students to make wise beginnings in the world outside of school. Further, the student must sense in the atmosphere of the school, a concern which does not demand that his explorations become tantamount to withdrawal. Ideally, he should conduct his inquiries secure in the knowledge, that should he decide not to leave, his decision will be readily accepted. Of course, these proposals depend upon the school's awareness of the student's imminent departure.

Recommendations:

1. School officials should establish contact with agencies and persons capable of assisting students to make valid appraisals of the suitability of their tentative plans. Such resources include the local branches of the United States Employment Service, recruiting representatives of the several branches of the Armed Forces, personnel officers of local businesses, and church officials.

Because of their attitude toward school, and the differences in certain respects between them and the remainder of the study body--age and measured ability, for example--it may be difficult to interest potential early school leavers in many of the extraclass activities provided by the school. Nevertheless situations should be developed in which these students may enjoy school experiences oriented toward their needs, from which the standards of achievement that they often cannot attain in regular classes, are removed.

Recommendations:

1. Extraclass activities, closely aligned to the needs and capacities of students vulnerable to withdrawal, should be provided.

FOLLOWUP ACTIVITIES

Studies of the experience of students following graduation are often made. However, similar examinations of the status of students who voluntarily withdraw are relatively infrequent. It seems unlikely that any other materials concerning the disadvantaged position of early school leavers could have a greater impact upon students who may be considering withdrawal, upon staff members, and upon parents, than a review of the situations encountered by dropouts from the local secondary school. In fact, such an activity might well be assigned to a group of potential withdrawals.

Recommendations:

1. A study of the experiences of students who withdrew from the local school should be conducted. Preferably the study should include those who have been away at least a year.

2. The findings of this study should be reviewed and discussed with students generally, and identified vulnerables, particularly, as well as staff members and parents.

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Working jointly, counselors and teachers can accomplish much to reduce the incidence of early school leaving. Certain approaches to the problem, however, extend into areas of responsibility beyond those normally attached to their positions. To implement such proposals requires the approval of the local administrative officials. As mentioned earlier, support of all the school community is essential to an effective attack upon the problem. Local administrators, especially, must be so committed, since staff members may adjust their efforts to the apparent interest of their supervisors, and because their sanction is necessary for large scale or interdisciplinary ventures.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

School retention rates can be improved when counselors and staff members together attack the problem, when they earnestly work to involve the parents of potential dropouts in their efforts, and when they take advantage of predictive techniques to focus their efforts upon potential dropouts.

The special role of the counselor may be to provide a communication center for the staff team attempting to assist individual students. By virtue of his position, he has greater access to students, parents, and teachers as well as pupil record information than do some of his colleagues. This is not to say his contribution is any more vital than that of any other staff members, and certainly not to indicate that he alone must bear the responsibility for the reduction of early school leaving. Each member of the staff must offer his own unique assistance to individual potential dropouts. The counselor, in addition, serves as a liaison between the team members.

Specifically, school districts interested in improving their holding power rates may wish to consider the following steps: (1) Ascertain the holding power of one or more recent graduating classes and study the reasons that pupils left school in grades seven through twelve. (2) Develop and keep up-to-date records of pertinent information for each pupil. (3) Identify potential dropouts systematically. (4) Be particularly alert to dropout proneness in non-promoted students and those whose school marks take a marked turn downward. (5) Arrange and coordinate staff efforts to prevent early school leaving. (6) Consider for potential dropouts, school program adjustments, school-work experience programs, additional counseling, summer contacts by school personnel, and extracurricular activities. (7) Closely involve the parents of potential dropouts in all retention efforts.

Schools frequently seek standards with which to compare their retention (holding power) rates. Logically, the only relevant standard is the local school's capacity to assist pupils. If a study of the characteristics of pupils who have dropped out of the local school reveals that substantial numbers could have been assisted to remain with "reasonable" efforts on the part of the local staff, then the retention rate, regardless of its magnitude, cannot be termed satisfactory. A consensus on the definition of "reasonable" must be reached by the local staff, since the problem seems to yield only to long-term commitments by the majority of those working with individual potential dropouts.

Our results suggest that small-rural and large-urban school districts, in which the socioeconomic level of parents may be somewhat less than in districts that fall between these extremes, may have special problems in improving their holding power rate.